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SUBJECT: ELECTION DISPUTE: PARTIES SET AGENDA TO GUIDE LOCAL TALKS

REF: MASERU 269

¶1. Representatives of all political parties and the Independent Election Committee met on August 5 to begin talks around contentious issues related to the 2007 elections. In a meeting hosted at the local UNDP offices, the stakeholders agreed to accept retired local Anglican Bishop Phillip Mokuku as mediator.

The stakeholders also agreed not to talk to the media about the discussions, but some sources indicate that there was a spirited debate over the agenda, with the governing Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) initially refusing to allow a reallocation of proportional representation seats to be included. However, the final agenda apparently includes this issue, as well as that of formally declaring an opposition leader in parliament.

¶2. Neither the Prime Minister, head of the LCD, nor Tom Thabane, head of the All Basotho Convention (ABC), the largest opposition party, was present for yesterday's talks. Post contacts speculate that Thabane's absence indicates his pique over the Prime Minister's lack of participation. The LCD was represented by the Deputy Prime Minister and five other ministers, while the party's deputy chair represented the ABC. All other political party leaders were present.

¶3. The group of stakeholders will meet again on Wednesday, August 12, and post will continue to report on developments.

POWER